

**EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT
RATIFICATION
IN INDIANA:**

TOO LITTLE . . . TOO LATE . . .

By

**By Beth Van Vorst Gray
1998**

FOREWORD, 2018—AN UPDATE

Maybe Not too Late After All!

Although Indiana was the last state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) before the artificial deadline set by a House committee for its ratification, the amendment to give women equal status in the Constitution has not gone away; it is very much alive and well. Ratification by Nevada in March, 2017 and by Illinois in May, 2018 are the results of consistent and persistent work towards the goal of passage by many organizations and count as the 36th and 37th state to do so.

So, in theory, we are just one state away from ratification. One of James Madison's amendments continued to work its way through the states more than 200 years after congressional approval. In May 1992, Michigan became the 38th state to ratify, making it the 27th Amendment, which says that salary increases for members of Congress do not go into effect until the term after they were approved. So, supporters of the ERA are questioning the validity of the deadline (the only proposed amendment to carry such a restriction) and . . . and pushing for more states to ratify it. The deadline has been challenged in court (mentioned in a footnote in the original text of this article, 1998), and, of course, in sustained lobbying efforts for ratification if 38 states. Upon one more state ratification, expect fireworks, more legal challenges, and intense lobbying on the legitimacy of the deadline and the passage of the ERA.

Following is an excerpt from the Alice Paul Institute's webpage, published in June, 2018 that states the present status clearly (www.equalrightsamendment.org).

“The ERA in the States. The Equal Rights Amendment was passed by Congress on March 22, 1972 and sent to the states for ratification. In order to be added to the Constitution, it needed approval by legislatures in three-fourths (38) of the 50 states.

By 1977, the legislatures of 35 states had approved the amendment. In 1978, Congress voted to extend the original March 1979 deadline to June 30, 1982. However, no additional states voted yes before that date, and the ERA fell three states short of ratification.

The 15 states that did not ratify the Equal Rights Amendment before the 1982 deadline were Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia.

Since formulation of the "[three-state strategy](#)" for ratification in 1994, ERA bills have been introduced in subsequent years in one or more legislative sessions in twelve of the unratified states (Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah, and Virginia).”

FOREWORD, 1998

The Indiana State Senate, on January 18, 1977, adopted HJR 2, a joint resolution approved by the House of Representatives in like form on January 12. With that final action, the 100th Indiana General Assembly ratified the “Equal Rights Amendment” (ERA) after five years of discussion and debate on the local and national scene, and extensive, emotional lobbying by both pro- and anti- ERA forces in Indiana. Indiana was the 35th and last state to ratify out of the thirty-eight states needed to make it the 28th amendment to the United States Constitution. And I was there.

Elected in 1970 to the position of Principal Secretary of the Indiana State Senate by the Republican caucus, I remained in that post until August 1976. From January 1973, when the ERA was introduced for the first time in Indiana, until 1976 I had a window on the action. Literally. When in session, my post was in the “well,” a half-circle desk below the podium of the presiding officer; in the remodeled Senate of 1974, my office faced floor-to-ceiling walnut-paned windows which opened on an uninterrupted view of the floor of the Senate. When the General Assembly is in session, the entire statehouse echoes with the dueling loudspeakers of the House and Senate; but I had a front row seat to the action as well.

It was, at times, an uncomfortable seat because I was an ERA advocate although I was elected by and reported to the Senate Republican Caucus, generally considered the road block to Indiana’s ratification of the ERA and firmly in control of conservative senators. Under the Standing Rules of the Senate, the majority caucus is responsible for administration of the chambers and elects the Principal Secretary to carry out those duties. The 97th General Assembly (1971-1972) was the first authorized by referendum in the 1970 general election to meet annually. New ground was being broken, precedents set for year-round staffing and professionalism, and systems were being established to provide information available through the Principal Secretary’s office to all members of the Senate and the public. The new Indiana Code was introduced and enacted, and computer technology came on the scene. It was front-page news when we brought a huge Xerox photocopier into a room adjacent to the Senate floor. Prior to 1970, the entire House and Senate, staff and members, were dependent on one sole copier in the legislative support agency that, at that time, closed at 5 pm.

Senator Phillip E. Gutman (R., Fort Wayne), President *pro tempore* of the Senate, to whom I reported, made it very clear that the political life of the Senate was the domain of the Senators; the administrative support system was my responsibility as the Principal Secretary. As an individual citizen outside the State House, however, I was free to express myself at will. My visible support of ratification of the ERA was, however, unpopular with some members of the caucus that elected me in 1970 and twice more – in 1972 and 1974.

Although new to the workforce, I realized that women needed the tools to provide for their own and their children’s well-being, especially when the traditional customs and responsibilities of marriage break down; a new generation of young women was

entering the workplace fully prepared to be there, but without the same rights of the young men. Women were not issued credit in their own name and equality in pay, still not in balance, was a real joke in the early '70s. Harassment and other kinds of discrimination were commonplace and it seemed that no one, except the powerless women who were being discriminated against, even noticed.

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Congressional Action . . . And Inaction

Before the Equal Rights amendment could be considered by the states, the amendment, in the form of a joint resolution, had to be adopted by both houses of Congress. In 1972, when circumstances made it possible to consider the amendment after 50 years of introduction in every session of Congress, political pundits were predicting adoption and swift ratification by the state legislatures. As we now know, Indiana was the thirty-fifth, and last, state to ratify before June, 1977—the deadline for state ratification negotiated by Representative Emanuel Cellers (D., NY) and Senator Sam Ervin (D., NC). The ERA was one of a few proposed constitutional amendments to carry a restriction on the length of time allowed for ratification by the states. As 1977 approached and ratification of three more states was needed, the deadline was extended by Congress to June, 1982 but the three additional ratifications were not found.

The amendment itself was simple enough: three short paragraphs, consisting of the final version written by Alice Paul in 1943 (merging the Lucretia Mott version, introduced in prior sessions, and the Susan B. Anthony version).

“Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

“Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.”

“Section 3. This amendment shall take effect seven years after the date of ratification.”

The equal rights amendment was introduced every year from 1923 until adopted by Congress in 1972 and, stubbornly, every year after the ratification extended timetable ran out, which was from 1983 to present. In the 107th Congress (2001-2002), Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D., MA) introduced the ERA in the U.S. Senate, word for word as written in 1923, as SJR 10; Representative Carolyn Maloney, (D., NY) introduced it as HJR 40 in the House of Representatives.

During the 1960s, Representative Cellers (D-New York) held the Equal Rights Amendment prisoner in his powerful House Judiciary Committee where it stayed for more than a decade. In June 1970, Representative Martha Griffiths (D-Michigan) got 218 colleagues in the House to sign a discharge petition forcing Cellers to pass the

resolution out of committee, a procedure known appropriately as “blasting” in some legislatures. There is no greater ally in a legislative struggle than an influential member of the body itself – like Griffiths – and there is no deadlier enemy than an influential member of the body itself, -- like Cellers – as Indiana pro-ERA forces would learn a few years later, as Senator Joan Gubbins (R., Indianapolis) led the Indiana battle against ratification of the ERA.

Both houses of Congress must adopt, by a two-thirds majority, a joint resolution in like form to approve a constitutional amendment. It is then sent to all state legislative bodies for ratification.

The ERA passed the House in 1971 and was sent to the Senate where it was scheduled for third reading on March 22, 1972. The Friday before, March 17, Senator Birch E. Bayh (D, Indiana), fearing a lack of committed votes for passage, called upon members of the National Women’s Political Caucus (NWPC, a newly formed bipartisan group that supported women in both parties to run for political office), National Organization of Women, better known as NOW, the League of Women Voters, and other national pro-ERA groups to work through their members in the several states to create grassroots support for the measure with the senators from their districts. In Indiana, probably among others, he called his good friend, Virginia McCarty, then a prominent attorney in Indianapolis and a mover and shaker in democrat politics. The call to arms was significant because, if Indiana is any measure, it highlighted the urgency of ratification and it brought women experienced in politics into the pro-ERA network who were knowledgeable about lobbying and the political process.

Proponents called friends and allies asking them to call THEIR friends and allies to urge them to call or write their state’s U.S. senators asking for adoption. By Monday morning, March 20, the Senate was inundated with mail and phone calls from all over the country urging adoption, and, on March 22, 1972 the Equal Rights Amendment was adopted by the Senate, which, together with the earlier House passage, completed the action for the question to be referred to the state legislatures for ratification.

Indiana Women Go Into Action

Notice was given to each of the states that Congress had so acted, and that the clock was running. In Indiana, organizations were mobilizing to work for ratification. The Indiana chapter of NOW (National Organization of Women, founded by Betty Newcomb from Muncie, then the Affirmative Action Officer at Ball State) was mobilizing; the newly formed Indiana and the Greater Indianapolis Women’s Political Caucus (IWPC and GIWPC), both organizations co-chaired by Virginia Dill McCarty, a Democrat and prominent attorney in Indianapolis, and Mary Anne Butters, a Republican from Indianapolis and former newspaperwoman on the staff of then Mayor Richard G. Lugar. Other established local groups, including the local units of national organizations that were supporting the ERA, joined the effort as well – the AFL/CIO, Church Women United, the YWCA, and the League of Women Voters to mention only a few.

The women’s political caucuses, by the way, were coalitions of committed democrat and republican feminists working together [ed. Note: members now

described as “multi-partisan”] in the same organization for the common goal of bring more women into political action, a highly unique occurrence. The National Women’s Political Caucus, was founded on July 10, 1971 to increase the number of women in all aspects of political life – as elected and appointed officials, as judges in state and federal courts, and as delegates to national conventions. On that date, 320 women from all over the United States met in Washington, D.C., to found the NWPC. The founders included famous names such as Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm, and Gloria Steinem. Though a fledgling institution, it sparked national participation.

In Indiana, most of the founders were seasoned politicians, attorneys, and business and community leaders. The “organizational” meeting for both IWPC and GIWPC was held in Virginia McCarty’s family room (Indianapolis, Indiana) in October, 1971. Though discussions were often heated and verged on the partisan in board meetings, voices calmed by a few glasses of wine and the importance of ratification by the Indiana General Assembly. The resulting collaboration proved a successful one in support of the Equal Rights Amendment and other critical legislation. Hoosiers for the ERA (HERA) was the official campaign name; both the IWPC members and NOW members, an early feminist organization, took the lead in the lobbying efforts.

The first chance to introduce a joint resolution to the Indiana General Assembly would be in the 98th General Assembly, 1973-1974. In the short time left in 1972 before the session began in January 1973, ERA proponents worked feverishly, starting from ground zero, to lay the foundation for introduction and passage. Discussions with legislative and party leaders were under way and a speakers’ bureau was formed to present the Equal Rights Amendment information to existing women’s groups in the state. Membership drives and lobbying seminars were launched in every corner of the state and women and men who supported the amendment formed a strong coalition and active grassroots support of the measure. The legislative members’ probable yeas and nays were toted up and organizations known to be favorable to passage were recruited. A pro-ERA liaison from his/her own district was assigned to each member of the General Assembly to put local pressure on recalcitrant legislators and to support the pro-ERA legislators. They held fundraisers, set up information booths at state and county fairs, courted the news media, and enlisted large numbers of people to their cause. The “basics” were in place.

As support grew over the state and, as the ERA forces joined their talents and energy with other well-established organizations with a legislative presence, their effectiveness increased. Eventually, these organizations were instrumental in campaigns to elect senators who supported the ERA and work against those who don’t. In 1975, Richard Harris, (R-Evansville) credited their support as a major factor in defeating Harry S. Thompson, a Republican incumbent who opposed the measure. John Larson (R- Lake and Porter) successfully moved from the House to a Senate seat as well. This was another race targeted and supported by HERA.

In late 1974, the groundwork, education, and media connections being established, Hoosiers for the Equal Rights Amendment (HERA), a pro-ERA coalition of organizations supported the lobbying effort led by Virginia Dill McCarty (D, Marion

County) and Betty Packard Voris (R., Marion County), members of the Indiana Women's Political Caucus, both of whom were seasoned politicians. A seat-of-the-pants-funded operation representing a coalition of over 60 organizations, HERA set up an office across the street from the Statehouse. As fund-raising became more effective, HERA opened an in-session hospitality room in the nearby Hilton Hotel. Coordination and cooperation existed among the coalition members, some of which provided lighter moments in the midst of a very focused campaign.

As Jill Chambers, then and still an active member of NOW, pointed out recently, "We often played 'Good Guys/Bad Guys'." NOW was an activist group that, among other methods of persuasion, utilized civil disobedience as a tool. Therefore, when they would picket the Governor's mansion or otherwise ruffle official feathers, the ERA lobbyists (primarily IWPC members, but operating, of course, under the same HERA umbrella as the NOW contingency) would go to legislative and government leaders and say "Wouldn't you rather deal with us? See our white hats?" This almost backfired when a truckload of pro-ERA mail ended up on the lawn of a representative from Bloomington who had reneged (in a committee hearing) on a campaign promise to support the ERA. The press thoroughly enjoyed this; it was decidedly NOT humorous, however, to the leadership of the Indiana General Assembly and the pro-ERA lobbyists had some fence-mending to do.

These were the days before e-mail or voicemail; it even pre-dates the wide use of faxes and copy machines. It was, however, crucial to be able to get word out quickly across the state and a statewide "telephone tree" was established that could – and did – produce astounding results in a short period of time. With one well-placed phone call from a telephone booth at the Statehouse, callers in coalition organizations across the state were notified, each "branch" calling the assigned "leaves" in their group. A virtual shower of mail and phone calls could be generated – targeting constituents in one legislator's home district or creating a flood of constituent mail from all districts to their representatives in the House or Senate.

The Battle Lines Are Established in the Indiana General Assembly

Pushing a proposal through the Indiana General Assembly is a daunting task; overcoming the deadly inertia of the *status quo* takes diligent attention to many fronts. While promoting the issues, it is also necessary to keep faith with the legislators who support your side and maintain credibility with the public, partners in your coalition, other lobbyists, and state officials. By 1975, the HERA coalition had gained enough credibility to be sought out by other groups to endorse significant legislation on women's issues. The pro-ERA lobbyists, then, use their own hard-won influence and were working hand-in-glove with other groups to pass needed women's rights legislation in Indiana. Indeed, many pro-women's issues were addressed in the late 1970s. In 1973, ninety-seven Indiana laws on the books with discriminatory language were identified and amended or eliminated.

House Joint Resolution 12, the "proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to equal rights for men and women," was introduced in the 1973 "long" session of the 98th General Assembly and was adopted by the House of Representatives by a vote of 53 to 45 on February 14, 1973. There is some subtle

irony here; quite possibly it was the work of the authors, William S. Latz (R., Fort Wayne) and Clifford D. Arnold (D., La Porte), or, perhaps, Kermit O. Burrous (R., Peru) who, as Speaker, had the power to hand bills down for passage . . . or not. HJR 12 was heard in the House and adopted on Valentine's Day! Arnold, by the way, was either sponsor or author of the Equal Rights Amendment every session that it was introduced. Neither the Republican nor Democrat Caucuses in the House of Representatives wavered in support of the ERA over the four years it took to achieve ratification, although the overall vote was tight from time to time.

Pro- and anti-ERA forces were extremely active in presenting their arguments – in one instance, anti-ERA lobbyists put fresh-baked bread on the desk of each legislator – and no votes could be taken for granted. Conservative legislators, both House and Senate, claimed, generally, that it violated state sovereignty since enforcement was mandated by the resolution to be at the federal level, and was, therefore, a “states’ rights issue”; a second powerful argument suggested that the ERA would “weaken the family structure.”

Anti-Era Forces Join The Fray

Indiana was on the list of “ain’t gonna happen” by the aforementioned pundits. When ratification by 38 states—including Indiana—became a real possibility in early 1974, Phyllis Schlafly of the “Eagle Forum” in Illinois, an influential conservative organization, founded the STOP ERA movement. Schlafly and her followers exploited the fears already lurking in the minds of many people: girls/daughters going to war, unisex bathrooms, nullification of rape laws, and the like. The media and scholarly studies from the early 1980s, however, give Schlafly high marks for the successful STOP ERA campaign she mounted. Through her already established information and funding sources, her newsletters and publications targeting women, she provided focus, research, and high visibility for the anti-ERA position that contributed in great measure in securing thirteen states in the “no” column. The press gave the issue excellent coverage especially when the anti-ERA forces geared up and debates between the two factions heated up as attention moved to the marginal, but very emotional, issues.

The fallout in Indiana from the intensified opposition was considerable, though not insurmountable. An Indianapolis divorce attorney, Evelyn Pitschke (now deceased), was legal advisor to both the Eagle Forum and STOP ERA. She and Senator Joan Gubbins (R., Indianapolis) led the anti-ERA movement in Indiana and their efforts eroded some ERA support in the House and almost claimed a crucial vote in the Senate in 1977. By 1976, STOP ERA was in high gear but the national ERA “steamroller” faltered, eventually coming to a dead stop.

The House joint resolution was brought to a vote in the Senate late in the session – April 2nd, 1973 – and was defeated by a vote of 16 to 34. Members of the Senate Republican Caucus continued to block passage of the ERA for the six years it controlled the Senate – three General Assemblies – the 97th, 98th, and 99th; from 1971 through 1976.

Meanwhile, back in the Indiana General Assembly in 1972, pro-ERA lobbyists squared off against the Senate Republican Caucus which outnumbered the Democrats

in the Senate by 30 to 20. The caucus had elected Phillip E. Gutman as President *pro tempore* and Martin K. Edwards (R., New Castle) as Majority Caucus Leader. James A. Gardner (R., Fowler) was appointed Majority Floor Leader. There was a strong conservative contingency in this caucus and Senator Joan Gubbins (R, Indianapolis) and Angeline P. Astatt led them in opposition to the ERA. Other legislators, republican and democrat, needed those conservative votes to enact other legislation and could not, though perhaps not “against” the ERA, sacrifice votes needed from those conservative republican members for their own priority legislation. Senator Robert D. Garton (R., Columbus; now president *pro tempore* of the Senate), Republican co-sponsor with Philip Hayes (D-Evansville), of the joint resolution to approve the equal rights amendment, was the lone ERA advocate in the Republican Caucus until the November 1976 elections. Garton, as a freshman senator in 1971, had introduced a bill on non-discrimination in the workplace for women and other individuals which passed. He stayed the course and was instrumental in the ratification of the ERA in 1977. The Senate democrats, though having several strong anti-ERA voices, tipped the balance in favor of ratification but never had enough votes to achieve adoption until 1977 when democrats controlled the Senate.

One of the toughest arguments to counter, in Indiana as well as in other states, was the state's rights stand that claimed the ERA issue as one of those included as not specifically authorized by the Constitution, which, therefore, remains at the discretion of the several states.

Legislative Action in 1973 through 1975

In both the 1973 and 1975 sessions, Senators Gubbins and Clarence Kelley (R., South Bend) introduced an amendment to the state constitution to guarantee equal rights regardless of sex. If successful, that action would circumvent passage of the amendment that had federal “teeth.” This measure was adopted by the Senate on March 12, 1975, on a tie vote broken by Robert D. Orr (R., Evansville), President of the Senate, who cast the deciding vote of “aye” (an “aye” vote for the Gubbins amendment was, in effect, a nullifying vote for the federal amendment). The measure was adopted in the Senate but did not survive the democrat-controlled House committee assignment to Rules and Legislative Procedures. The issue of equal rights for women was dead until the next General Assembly, the 100th, convened in January 1976.

Introduced and adopted by the House in both the 1975 and 1976 session, the joint resolution for approval of the ERA did not, however, survive assignment to the Senate “graveyard committee” chaired by Senator Edwards, Majority Caucus Chairman. In 1975, his Governmental Affairs Committee met to consider the amendment and killed the resolution by an 8 to 5 party-line vote – on Valentine’s Day. That same session, a motion to amend the resolution on second reading was proposed by Senator Garton. The motion to strip another joint resolution (remove its contents and substitute new language) that had already passed out of committee and insert the Equal Rights Amendment was also defeated, 27 to 21. The Indianapolis *Star* reported that Garton, in requesting the substitution, asked “What is wrong with extending the constitutional rights and privilege to all members of our society? . . .”

The 1976 Election Battles

During the 1976 elections, now nominating and electing the 100th General Assembly (including the 1976 and 1977 sessions of the General Assembly), pro-ERA activists in the coalition worked to unseat incumbents who were opposed to the ERA. Volunteers worked in the precincts in many cities across the state and, in Evansville, helped J. Richard Harris (R., Evansville), on record as an advocate for women's rights, win the Senate. He defeated Harry Thompson (R, Evansville), who had voted consistently against the measure and John Larson (R., Lake and Porter), a pro-ERA legislator who had served in the House of Representative, had defeated the democrat incumbent there.

The ultimate battlefield, however, was the Indiana State Senate vote tally board and, finally, in 1977, the hard work of the pro-ERA coalition paid off. In the 100th General Assembly, the House of Representatives was again republican-controlled by a slim margin of 52 to 48 under the leadership of Speaker Kermit Burrous (R., Brazil) and the democrats had won control of the Senate by a slim margin of 6 votes (28 to 22) under the leadership of President *pro tempore* Robert J. Fair (D, Princeton). Frank O'Bannon (D., Corydon), now governor, chaired the powerful Senate Finance Committee and Senator Martin K. Edwards was e minority leader of the Senate Republican Caucus. Resigning from my post before the election and now working as a Legal Administrator at an Indianapolis law firm, I was now watching proceedings through the glass windows at the back of the Chambers and assisting the lobbying efforts of the ERA coalition. There was a joint hearing on the Equal Rights Amendment in the House chambers, which were jam-packed. Emotions ran high, and the room was filled with the angst and antipathy on both sides.

More Legislative Maneuvers

On January 12, 1977, the Equal Rights Amendment (now HJR 2) was adopted by the House of Representatives by a vote of 54 to 45 and was again sent to the Senate, now controlled by the democrats.

There were a series of legislative maneuvers as HJR 2 made its way through the steps of passage in the Senate. Within the latitude of the Senate Rules, they were attempts to defer the now-imminent passage of the resolution in hopes that the momentum to passage could be stalled.

On first reading, Senator Bruggenschmidt (D., Jasper) introduced a motion to amend on second reading to strip the resolution and insert in lieu thereof the appointment of a study committee to report to the General Assembly before September 1978 and, further, that a referendum on the issue be placed on the ballot for the 1978 general election. The motion was ruled out of order by the chair (President Orr presiding), and the decision of the chair was appealed. Senator Fair presided during the appeal and the resulting vote, yeas 26, nays 23, defeated the stripping attempt and was a harbinger of success at last, Senators Bob Garton, Dick Harris and John Larson, now members of the minority Republican Caucus, swaying the vote in favor of ratification.

More Legislative Sparring

Senator Thomas J. Teague (D-Marion), Senate sponsor, called HJR 2 down for third reading on the next day, January 18, 1977, in the presence of a tense Senate body and gallery anticipating a close, hard-fought vote. It was less than two weeks into the session – such “fast track” passage was unusual, but crucial because the more time that elapsed before third reading when the bill was placed on passage, the more “yea” votes could become “soft.” Senator W. Wayne Townsend (D., Grant), serving a conservative constituency, began to have second thoughts on his promised “yea” vote. A personal phone call from the First Lady, Rosalynn Carter, in which she promised to visit his district to support him in return for his vote, saved the day. Maureen Reagan visited the Republican legislators and George H. Bush, then head of the Republican National Committee (and later, 41st president) was on record in favor of the amendment and had called the members of the Republican caucus asking each to vote his or her conscience in light of the importance of the issue for women. His careful wording in the conservative caucus didn’t garner any extra votes, but it did shore up the three battle-weary Republicans who would put the Senate ERA vote “in the green.”

One “yea” vote changed to “nay” would have thrown the Senate into a tie (adoption requires 26 votes), which would be broken by the President of the Senate, Lieutenant Governor Orr. Although low-key in his statements about the measure, he had already indicated possible opposition to a federal constitutional amendment to adopt ERA in a key vote in 1975 (he broke a tie vote – the only time a President of the Senate is allowed to vote – in favor of a state level constitutional amendment); a “nay” from the Chair would have defeated the amendment.

Again relying on procedural tactics to defer passage, Senator Edwards introduced a motion (signed by 23 other senators) to defer third reading of HJR 2 until March 15, 1977. The motion was tabled by a roll call vote of 26-24 which was another indication that victory was close at hand. Ratification had been an emotional issue and the strain on legislators was beginning to show. In Senate co-sponsor J. Richard Harris’s closing speech, he said “These have been difficult days and I know well what difficult days they have been . . . I hope that, when we come back [from the Democrat and Republican caucuses which had been called immediately following the vote] to handle the serious business of this state, the divisiveness of this issue will not reflect in our findings.” The voting machine was opened and the measure passed by a “squeaker” vote of 26 to 24. Republican Senators Garton, Harris, and Larson joined twenty-three Democrats in voting aye.

Adoption of House Joint Resolution 2 in the Senate and – RATIFICATION.

Packed with both anti-ERA representatives wearing big “STOP” signs reading “STOP ERA” and ERA proponents wearing “ERA – YES!!!” buttons, the Senate gallery and the halls beyond the Chambers were teeming with pro- and anti-ERA supporters. When the green lights went up on the board to the total of 26, the gallery and the halls beyond the Chambers exploded with cheers until the President of the Senate gavelled them down. House Joint Resolution 2 became law (Public Law 356)

and Congress was so informed. Indiana was the thirty-fifth, and last, state to ratify out of a needed thirty-eight.¹

Personal involvement in a cause is life-changing and, in this instance, the years since have added an historic aspect to those frantic days. Friendships and networking created under the press of a common goal and a deadline every day forges a special bond. For women of the '70s, the ERA ratification campaign was a heady experience in empowerment; for women of today and the future, a necessary first-step out into new space that must be taken for progress in any area of endeavor.

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¹ There was an unsuccessful attempt in the 1978 session of the Indiana General Assembly to rescind the action whereby the Equal Rights Amendment was ratified in 1977 on the grounds that supporters of the ERA made "False and deceptive use of forged letters" in the House. There are, however, as of this writing, some interesting recent developments in the battle for the ERA. There is a legal challenge pending which asserts that the Equal Rights Amendment, as passed by Congress in 1972 and ratified by 35 states, can be declared a constitutional amendment with ratification of three more states, disregarding the time limitation for passage that was negotiated into the joint resolution by Senator Ervin and Representative Celler over thirty years ago.